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LEVEL news

Great Lakes - St. Lawrence River Water Levels

Volume 6, Number 9 **September 4, 1998**

Large Decrease Since Last Year

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August Precipitation Over the Great Lakes

As a percentage of the long-term August average:

Great Lakes Basin	92%
Lake Erie (including Lake St. Clair)	106%
Lake Superior	84%
Lakes Michigan-Huron	86%
Lake Ontario	119%

Note: These figures are preliminary.

August Outflows

Lake Levels Continue to Decline

All of the Great Lakes experienced a larger than usual decline in water levels during August, continuing the trend of the past several months. As a result of the decline in levels, Lakes Superior, Huron, St. Clair and Erie were about 25 to 35 centimetres lower then they were in August 1997, while Lake Ontario was eight cm lower this August.

Dry conditions for the second consecutive month led to the above average declines during August in the levels of Lakes Superior and Huron. While it was somewhat wetter over the drainage basins of Lakes Erie and Ontario, above average outflows from these lakes contributed to their decline. Also, it is likely that the (continued on next page) warm air temperatures we have experienced over the spring and summer have led to high rates of evaporation from the lakes and the surrounding land.

At the beginning of September, Lake Superior was 21 cm below its average level. Lakes Huron, St. Clair and Erie were 17, 33, and 35 cm, respectively above their average level, while Lake Ontario was four cm above average.

It is expected that levels of all the lakes will continue to decline through the autumn months. As a result of these lower levels, the risk of damage to shore property is much lower this fall than it was last year. However, despite this improvement, there is still a moderate risk of damage to properties along Lake Erie in the event of severe fall storms.

Lake Ontario Outflows Reduced

In order to provide relief from near-record low water levels on Lake St. Lawrence, the International St. Lawrence River Board of Control has temporarily reduced Lake Ontario outflows by approximately two percent below the flow called for by the regulation plan.

During the three-week period from August 20 to September 9, Lake Ontario's outflow was reduced to 200 cubic metres per second less than the outflow called for by the regulation plan. From September 10 through October 9, the outflow will be the amount called for by the regulation plan. The flow reduction of 200 cubic metres per second will resume for three days from October 10-12.

From the Great Lakes

As a percentage of the long-term August average:

Lake Superior	67%
Lake Erie	112%
Lake Huron	101%
Lake Ontario	116%

Note: These figures are preliminary.

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Summary information for "LEVEL*news*"

Beginning October 15, the outflow will be increased to an amount greater than that called for by the regulation plan, in order to discharge the water held back during the preceding weeks. It is the Board's intention to discharge all this water before the end of the navigation season, if possible. However, a minimum water level of 72.6 metres will be maintained at Long Sault to promote safe navigation, which may limit the ability to quickly discharge this water.

The Board's strategy is intended to provide a measure of relief to riparians and recreational boaters in the Lake St. Lawrence area. It will provide up to 10 centimetres of water level increase on Lake St. Lawrence and temporarily raise the level of Lake Ontario up to three centimetres. Prior to this initiative, Lake St. Lawrence was about 70 centimetres below average.

Low Level on Lake Superior

The average water level of Lake Superior this August was 183.38 metres, which was 19 cm below the long term average August level. The record low level for August was set in 1926, and since then there has only been one August (1990) with a level lower than this year's.

The decline in Lake Superior's level over the past year has led to a large decrease in the lake's outflow. During this August, the outflow was just over one-half of the outflow during August 1997. Despite this decrease in outflow, dry conditions have led to an unusual decline in the lake's level at a time of year when it would typically be rising.

Open House Scheduled

The International Niagara Board of Control is holding an open house on October 20 at 7:30 p.m. at the Hyatt Regency Buffalo, Two Fountain Plaza, Buffalo, New York (Tel. 716-856-1234).

The purpose of this open house is to inform the public of the Board's current activities and to hear public comments and suggestions regarding the Board's work. In addition, information will be presented on Great Lakes' water levels, Ontario Hydro's proposed new diversion tunnel and the twinning of the Peace Bridge.

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